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Agricultural Transformation and Inclusive Economic Development in India

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture continues to play a significant role in India's economic and social development despite the growing contribution of industry and service sectors. Beyond food production, it supports rural livelihoods, generates employment, supplies raw materials to industries and contributes to poverty reduction. However, agriculture's share in national output remains relatively lower than its share in total employment, reflecting challenges related to labour productivity, rural income and employment opportunities. Addressing these issues is essential for achieving balanced and inclusive economic development. The present study examines the role of agriculture in promoting inclusive economic development in India through four major dimensions: the relationship between agricultural growth and employment generation; the impact of agricultural investment and productivity on rural development; the contribution of agriculture to poverty reduction and regional inequality; and the identification of appropriate policy measures to strengthen its developmental role. The study follows a qualitative, descriptive and analytical approach based on secondary data collected from government reports, official statistical publications, policy documents and relevant academic literature. Agriculture remains a major source of livelihood, particularly for rural households, small and marginal farmers and women workers. According to the Economic Survey 2024–25, the share of the workforce engaged in agriculture increased from 44.1 per cent in 2017–18 to 46.1 per cent in 2023–24. This highlights the continuing importance of agriculture in employment generation and the need to improve its productivity. Greater investment in irrigation, modern technology, rural infrastructure, market connectivity and allied activities such as dairy, fisheries and horticulture can strengthen the sector's performance. The study emphasises that agriculture should be recognised not merely as a traditional livelihood sector but as an important driver of employment, rural income growth, poverty alleviation and balanced regional development. Strengthening agricultural capabilities can contribute significantly to a more inclusive and sustainable Indian economy.

Keywords: Agriculture, Inclusive Economic Development, Employment Generation, Agricultural Investment, Productivity, Regional Inequality

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INTRODUCTION

Economic development is a multidimensional process that involves sustained growth in national income, improved living standards, employment generation and the reduction of poverty and economic inequalities. In developing countries, this process is generally accompanied by structural transformation, whereby labour and resources gradually shift from agriculture towards industrial and service activities (Lewis, 1954). India has also undergone considerable economic changes since independence, particularly following the economic reforms of 1991. These changes have contributed to industrial expansion, the growth of services and increasing urbanisation. Despite these developments, agriculture continues to hold a central position in India's economy. It provides livelihoods to a large section of the rural population and supports several interconnected activities, including food processing, livestock, fisheries, horticulture, transportation, storage and agricultural marketing. Thus, the sector's contribution extends beyond primary production and influences the broader rural economy. The continuing significance of agriculture becomes evident when its contribution to national income is compared with its share in employment. According to the Economic Survey 2025–26, agriculture and allied activities contribute nearly one-fifth of India's national income at current prices while providing employment to approximately 46.1 per cent of the workforce (Government of India, 2026). This disparity reflects differences in labour productivity and income opportunities between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

Agriculture also contributes to inclusive development through various economic linkages. Improvements in farm productivity can enhance rural incomes, increase purchasing power and generate demand for industrial goods such as fertilisers, machinery, seeds and irrigation equipment. Furthermore, the expansion of agro-based industries, food processing and allied activities can create additional employment opportunities in rural areas. These linkages highlight the important role of agriculture in promoting broader economic development (Johnston & Mellor, 1961). However, Indian agriculture continues to face challenges such as fragmented landholdings, inadequate irrigation, dependence on rainfall, limited access to institutional credit, insufficient storage infrastructure and unstable agricultural prices. Regional differences in agricultural productivity further contribute to unequal development outcomes.

This study argues that India's inclusive development strategy must give adequate importance to agricultural transformation alongside industrial and service-sector growth. Strengthening agricultural investment, productivity, infrastructure and diversification can improve rural livelihoods, reduce economic vulnerability and promote balanced regional development. Therefore, agriculture needs to be recognised as an important driver of inclusive and sustainable economic progress rather than merely a traditional source of employment and raw materials**.**

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The relationship between agriculture and economic development has been examined by several economists and development theorists and their contributions provide the theoretical foundation for understanding agriculture’s role in employment, productivity, poverty reduction and structural transformation. Johnston and Mellor (1961) in their influential work *The Role of*

Agriculture in Economic Development, explained that agriculture contributes to economic development through several important functions. These include supplying food to the growing population, providing labour to other sectors, generating savings and capital for investment, earning foreign exchange and creating demand for industrial goods. Their approach suggests that agricultural development is not separate from industrialization. Rather, agricultural progress can create favorable conditions for industrial growth by increasing rural incomes and expanding the domestic market. Lewis, W. Arthur (1954) has developed the dual-sector model of economic development. According to this model, a developing economy consists of a traditional sector, generally characterised by low productivity and surplus labour, and a modern sector with higher productivity and wages. The model explains the transfer of labour from the traditional sector to the modern sector. However, the Indian experience demonstrates that labour transfer alone does not guarantee inclusive development. If workers move from agriculture into low-paid informal employment, the quality of employment and household welfare may remain weak. John W. Mellor (1995) their study emphasized the importance of agricultural growth in initiating broader economic development. According to his approach, agricultural productivity growth increases farm incomes, creates demand for rural goods and services and supports the expansion of non-farm employment. This perspective is particularly relevant to India, where a large rural population depends on agriculture directly or indirectly. Sen, Amartya (1999) concept of development as freedom provides a broader understanding of economic development. Sen argues that development should be evaluated not merely through income growth but also through the expansion of human capabilities and opportunities. From this perspective, agricultural development becomes meaningful when it improves access to education, healthcare, nutrition, employment, economic participation and social security among rural households. Timmer (2002) explains that agriculture plays a central role in the process of structural transformation. Agricultural productivity growth can support poverty reduction and facilitate the movement of labour into more productive activities. However, this process requires investment, institutional support and effective rural development policies. The existing literature recognises the contribution of agriculture to economic development. However, the relationship between agricultural growth and inclusive development requires continuous examination in the context of changing employment patterns, rural inequality, climate-related risks, investment requirements and regional differences.

The present study attempts to bring these dimensions together. Instead of considering agricultural growth only in terms of production, it examines agriculture as a source of employment, rural income, poverty reduction and balanced regional development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the critical review of existing literature, the study identifies the following research questions. These questions are formulated to address the gaps in previous studies and examine the contribution of agriculture to inclusive economic development in India. The research questions provide a systematic direction for the present study.

1. How does agricultural growth contribute to employment generation in India?

2. To what extent do agricultural investment and productivity influence rural economic development?
3. How can agricultural development contribute to poverty reduction and the reduction of regional inequalities?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is based on the following objectives:

1. To analysis the relationship between agricultural growth and employment generation in India.
2. To examine the impact of agricultural investment and productivity on rural economic development.
3. To investigate the role of agriculture in reducing poverty and regional income inequalities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative, descriptive and analytical in nature. It examines the role of agriculture in inclusive economic development by interpreting existing economic trends, government policies, statistical indicators and theoretical explanations. This study is based on secondary data collected from economic survey of India. periodic labour force survey, agricultural statistics at a glance, household consumption expenditure survey, ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare publications, national statistical office reports, NABARD publications, RBI publications, research articles, books and academic journals. Its study has primarily considered the period from 2014–15 to 2023–24, depending on the availability and comparability of official data. Selected more recent policy and economic information is used where relevant. The study uses thematic analysis and descriptive interpretation. Secondary statistics are used to identify broad trends in employment, investment, consumption and inequality. These indicators are interpreted in relation to the four research objectives. The study does not employ econometric estimation or primary field surveys. Consequently, the findings identify patterns and plausible development mechanisms rather than statistically establishing causal relationships.

DISCUSSION

Agriculture, Employment Generation and Inclusive Development

Agriculture continues to be a major source of employment in India, particularly for the rural population. Despite the gradual decline in its relative contribution to national output compared with industry and services, the sector remains important for livelihood security. Its contribution to employment generation is therefore essential for understanding the process of inclusive economic development. Agricultural development generates employment through crop cultivation, livestock management and various related economic activities. According to the Economic Survey 2024–25, the proportion of India's workforce engaged in agriculture

increased from 44.1 per cent in 2017–18 to 46.1 per cent in 2023–24 (Government of India, 2025).

Table 1

Share of Agriculture in India's Workforce

Year	Share of workforce
2017–18	44.1%
2020–21	46.5%
2021–22	45.5%
2022–23	45.8%
2023–24	46.1%

Source: *Economic Survey 2024–25; Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India (2024).*

These figures demonstrate the continuing dependence of the Indian workforce on agriculture. However, a higher employment share does not necessarily indicate improved economic conditions in the sector. It may also result from insufficient alternative employment, seasonal migration patterns or limited absorption of labour by non-agricultural activities.

Gender Participation in Agriculture

Women constitute an important part of India's agricultural workforce. The Economic Survey 2024–25 indicates that the proportion of female workers engaged in agriculture increased from 57.0 per cent in 2017–18 to 64.4 per cent in 2023–24. The corresponding share among male workers declined from 40.2 per cent to 36.3 per cent (Government of India, 2025). Women participate in cultivation, harvesting, livestock management and post-harvest operations. Nevertheless, their contribution often remains inadequately recognised because of limited access to land ownership, institutional credit and agricultural decision-making.

Allied Activities and Rural Employment

Diversification into dairy, poultry, fisheries, horticulture and animal husbandry can provide additional livelihood opportunities and reduce dependence on seasonal crop production. Similarly, food processing, packaging, storage, transportation and agricultural marketing create employment beyond traditional farming. These activities strengthen rural entrepreneurship and connect agriculture with other sectors of the economy.

Agricultural Investment, Productivity and Rural Economic Development

Agricultural investment plays an important role in improving productivity, strengthening rural livelihoods and promoting inclusive economic development in India. Investment in irrigation, modern technology, agricultural research, rural infrastructure and storage facilities can enhance the productive capacity of agriculture. It also helps farmers improve resource utilisation,

increase output and generate better income opportunities. However, agricultural development differs across regions because of variations in irrigation, infrastructure, financial resources and technological access.

Agricultural Investment and Capital Formation

Agricultural investment refers to the creation of productive assets and facilities that support agricultural production and related activities. It includes both public and private investment. Public investment mainly covers irrigation projects, rural roads, electricity, agricultural research, warehouses, market infrastructure and soil conservation. Private investment includes farm machinery, improved seeds, irrigation equipment, livestock, dairy facilities and agricultural processing units. Both forms of investment are essential for improving agricultural efficiency and supporting rural development.

Gross Capital Formation (GCF) is an important indicator of investment in productive assets. According to *Agricultural Statistics at a Glance 2024*, total gross capital formation in agriculture and allied activities increased from approximately ₹3.32 lakh crore in 2014–15 to ₹7.80 lakh crore in 2023–24 at current prices (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2025).

Table 2

Gross Capital Formation in Agriculture and Allied Activities

₹ crore, current prices

Year	Public Investment	Private Investment	Total GCF
2014–15	47,319	2,84,545	3,31,863
2017–18	66,916	2,95,790	3,62,706
2020–21	79,655	4,51,384	5,31,038
2021–22	78,812	5,34,508	6,13,320
2022–23	90,166	6,21,989	7,12,154
2023–24	1,05,767	6,74,576	7,80,343

Source: *Agricultural Statistics at a Glance 2024, Government of India.*

The figures indicate an increase in the nominal value of agricultural capital formation, with private investment accounting for the larger share. Agriculture and allied activities represented approximately 8.1 per cent of total GCF at current prices in 2023–24. However, current-price estimates are influenced by price changes; therefore, constant-price data are necessary to assess actual investment growth (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2025).

Irrigation and Technological Development

Irrigation investment reduces dependence on uncertain rainfall and supports multiple cropping, crop diversification and more stable agricultural production. Similarly, improved seeds, machinery, digital advisory services, soil testing and scientific farming methods can increase

productivity and improve the efficiency of agricultural resources. However, small and marginal farmers often face financial and technical constraints in adopting modern technologies. Cooperative machinery services, custom hiring centres and farmer training can improve their access to these facilities.

Productivity, Income and Agricultural Diversification

Higher agricultural productivity can increase output, improve marketable surplus and strengthen farmers' earning capacity. Increased rural income may also stimulate demand for consumer goods and services, encouraging the growth of local businesses and rural enterprises. Nevertheless, higher production does not always guarantee greater profitability because farmers' earnings also depend on market prices, input costs, storage and bargaining power.

Diversification into dairy, fisheries, poultry, horticulture and animal husbandry can provide additional income sources and reduce dependence on seasonal crop cultivation. Food processing, packaging, transportation and cold-storage facilities can further expand employment and value addition in rural areas.

Agriculture, Poverty Reduction and Regional Income Inequalities

Agriculture plays an important role in promoting inclusive economic growth by supporting rural employment, strengthening household livelihoods and improving access to food. In a developing economy such as India, the relationship between agriculture and poverty is particularly significant because a considerable proportion of the rural population depends directly or indirectly on agricultural activities. The contribution of agriculture to poverty alleviation, however, is influenced by land distribution, productivity, irrigation facilities, employment opportunities and access to agricultural markets.

Agriculture and Rural Livelihood Security

Agriculture serves as an important economic foundation for rural households, providing employment and income through crop cultivation, livestock rearing, fisheries and other allied activities. It also supports supplementary occupations such as agricultural processing, transportation, storage and small-scale rural enterprises. These activities generate employment opportunities and strengthen the economic linkages between agriculture and the rural non-farm sector.

Nevertheless, dependence on agriculture does not necessarily ensure a stable standard of living. Fragmented landholdings, irregular rainfall, increasing cultivation expenses, limited institutional credit and fluctuations in agricultural prices can adversely affect the financial position of rural households. Consequently, agricultural development must focus not only on increasing production but also on improving income security and livelihood opportunities.

Agricultural Livelihoods and Household Consumption Patterns

Household consumption expenditure is an important indicator for examining differences in economic well-being across occupational groups. The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2023–24, conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO), provides useful evidence regarding the consumption patterns of rural and urban households.

According to the survey, average monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE), excluding the imputed value of free welfare benefits, increased to ₹4,122 in rural India in 2023–24, compared with ₹3,773 in 2022–23. In urban areas, the corresponding expenditure reached ₹6,996, compared with ₹6,459 in the previous survey year (MoSPI, 2025).

Table 3

Average Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure among Rural Households

₹ per person per month

Rural Household Category	**2022–23**	**2023–24**
Self-employed in agriculture	3,702	4,033
Self-employed in non-agriculture	4,074	4,407
Regular wage/salaried in agriculture	3,597	3,972
Casual labour in agriculture	3,273	3,652
All rural households	3,773	4,122

Source: *MoSPI, Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023–24,*

The figures indicate an improvement in average consumption expenditure across the reported rural occupational categories. However, households dependent on casual agricultural labour continued to record comparatively lower consumption levels than self-employed non-agricultural households. This suggests that occupational differences and the regularity of earnings remain important determinants of rural economic well-being. It is important to recognise that MPCE represents consumption rather than income; therefore, these estimates should not be interpreted as direct evidence of income growth or poverty reduction.

Agriculture and Food Security

Agricultural development contributes to food security by ensuring the availability of essential food commodities, including cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits, milk, eggs and fish. Food security involves three interconnected dimensions: availability of adequate food supplies, accessibility of food to households and affordability of nutritious products. Higher agricultural production can strengthen food availability, while improved household incomes, employment opportunities, public distribution mechanisms and effective market systems influence people's ability to obtain food. Therefore, agriculture contributes to poverty reduction through both income generation and improvements in household nutrition and food security.

Agricultural Development and Regional Consumption Inequality

Agricultural progress is not uniform across Indian states because regions differ in their natural resources, irrigation coverage, technological development, agricultural infrastructure and institutional arrangements. Areas with better irrigation facilities, research support, transportation and marketing networks generally have greater opportunities to improve

agricultural productivity. Conversely, rain-fed and economically disadvantaged regions often experience higher production risks and unstable rural earnings.

The HCES 2023–24 findings provide evidence of changes in regional consumption inequality. The rural Gini coefficient for India declined from 0.266 in 2022–23 to 0.237 in 2023–24. Similarly, Madhya Pradesh recorded a reduction from 0.230 to 0.208, whereas Chhattisgarh experienced a decline from 0.266 to 0.211 (MoSPI, 2025).

Table 4

Changes in Rural Consumption Inequality in Selected States

State	2022–23	2023–24
Madhya Pradesh	0.230	0.208
Chhattisgarh	0.266	0.211
Bihar	0.219	0.191
Maharashtra	0.291	0.229
All India	0.266	0.237

Source: *MoSPI, HCES 2023–24, Table 5; Government of India.*

The declining Gini values indicate a reduction in measured inequality in household consumption expenditure during the reference period. Nevertheless, consumption inequality should be distinguished from income inequality. These estimates also cannot establish a direct causal relationship between agricultural development and declining inequality, since several economic and social factors influence household consumption.

Agriculture and Inclusive Regional Development

Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh offer relevant examples for understanding the contribution of agriculture to regional economic development. In both states, agricultural progress is closely connected with rural employment, infrastructure development, irrigation and the economic conditions of small and marginal farmers. In Chhattisgarh, paddy cultivation represents an important component of the agricultural economy. Improvements in irrigation, scientific farming practices, storage facilities, rice processing and agricultural marketing can strengthen farmers' economic opportunities. Similarly, Madhya Pradesh can enhance rural development through crop diversification, efficient water management, agro-processing industries and stronger market connections.

These regional experiences suggest that agricultural development policies should reflect differences in agro-climatic conditions and local economic requirements rather than following an identical approach across all states.

Small Farmers and Inclusive Agricultural Growth

The distribution of agricultural development benefits is another important dimension of rural

poverty. Small and marginal farmers frequently encounter difficulties in obtaining institutional finance, purchasing modern agricultural inputs, adopting improved technologies and accessing remunerative markets. Limited land ownership and inadequate bargaining capacity further increase their economic vulnerability. Agricultural labourers, tenant cultivators and women engaged in farming may also remain excluded from several benefits of agricultural development. Therefore, inclusive agricultural policies should prioritise equitable access to institutional credit, irrigation, technological assistance, agricultural extension services and market infrastructure. Special attention is also necessary for landless workers, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and households residing in geographically disadvantaged regions.

Enhancing Public Investment and Agricultural Infrastructure

Public investment is fundamental to strengthening agricultural productivity and long-term rural development. Greater allocation of resources towards irrigation networks, rural connectivity, electricity, agricultural research, warehouses and market infrastructure can improve the productive capacity of farming. Such investment can also encourage private participation by reducing production risks and transaction costs. Priority should be given to economically backward and rain-fed regions where inadequate infrastructure restricts agricultural growth. The *Economic Survey 2024–25* also emphasises the importance of infrastructure, productivity and resilience in strengthening the agricultural sector (Ministry of Finance, 2025).

Sustainable Irrigation and Water Resource Management

Improving agricultural water availability is essential for reducing dependence on uncertain rainfall. Policy attention should extend beyond expanding irrigation coverage to ensuring the efficient utilisation and conservation of available water resources. Micro-irrigation, watershed development, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and restoration of traditional water bodies can contribute to sustainable agricultural production. Programmes such as the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana provide an institutional framework for improving irrigation access and water-use efficiency (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, n.d.).

Diversification and Development of Allied Activities

Dependence on a narrow range of agricultural crops can increase farmers' exposure to climatic and market-related risks. Diversification towards horticulture, dairy, poultry, fisheries, beekeeping and agroforestry can create additional income sources and strengthen rural livelihood security. However, successful diversification requires adequate technical assistance, processing facilities, cold storage, transportation and reliable marketing arrangements. An integrated approach can improve farm profitability while expanding employment opportunities in allied sectors.

Strengthening Agricultural Processing and Value Chains

Increasing farm output alone may not guarantee adequate returns to cultivators. Greater economic benefits can be generated by connecting agricultural production with processing, packaging, transportation and organised marketing. Investment in rice mills, dairy units, food-processing centres, cold storage and warehouses can reduce post-harvest losses and increase the value of agricultural products. Such initiatives can also create non-farm employment and

strengthen the relationship between agriculture and industrial development. The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund and PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme provide policy support in this direction (Government of India, 2025).

Promoting Farmer Producer Organisations

Farmer Producer Organisations can strengthen the economic position of small cultivators through collective procurement, production management and marketing. By organising farmers into collective institutions, these organisations can improve bargaining capacity, reduce transaction costs and facilitate access to technology and financial services. Government support should focus on managerial training, working capital, digital marketing and sustainable business operations. The effectiveness of FPOs should be assessed through improvements in members' incomes and market participation rather than merely their numerical expansion.

Increasing Women's Economic Participation

Women contribute substantially to agricultural production and allied occupations, but their participation is not always accompanied by equal access to land, finance, technology and institutional support. Agricultural policies should recognise women as independent economic participants and encourage their involvement in farming enterprises, self-help groups and FPOs. Training, credit facilities, land-related rights and leadership opportunities can strengthen women's economic independence and improve the inclusiveness of rural development.

Improving Agricultural Markets and Price Realisation

Farmers' economic returns depend on both production efficiency and the prices received for their produce. Transparent marketing arrangements, digital trading platforms, scientific storage, quality grading and direct market connections can improve price realisation. Initiatives such as the Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) aim to strengthen market integration and provide farmers with wider trading opportunities (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, 2025).

Developing Climate-Resilient Agricultural Systems

Climate variability, irregular monsoons, droughts, floods and increasing temperatures create considerable uncertainty for agricultural production. Future agricultural policies should therefore encourage drought-tolerant crop varieties, efficient irrigation, agroforestry, soil conservation and improved weather information services. Climate adaptation and sustainable resource management are essential for protecting agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods (Government of India, 2026).

FINDINGS

The study reveals that agriculture continues to play a significant role in promoting inclusive economic development in India. In 2023–24, the sector accounted for 46.1 per cent of total employment, highlighting its importance as a major source of rural livelihood. However, challenges such as low labour productivity, seasonal employment, disguised unemployment and informal working conditions continue to affect the quality of agricultural employment. The increasing participation of women, who represented 64.4 per cent of agricultural workers in

2023–24, emphasizes the need to strengthen their access to land, institutional credit, modern technology and decision-making opportunities. Agricultural investment has also increased, with Gross Capital Formation rising from approximately ₹3.32 lakh crore in 2014–15 to ₹7.80 lakh crore in 2023–24. Nevertheless, agriculture's share in total Gross Capital Formation remained relatively limited at around 8.1 per cent. The findings further highlight the importance of irrigation, transportation, storage, institutional finance and efficient marketing infrastructure in improving agricultural productivity. Diversification into dairy, fisheries, poultry, horticulture and food processing can generate additional employment and income opportunities. Differences in household consumption expenditure and regional agricultural development indicate persistent inequalities among rural communities and states. Furthermore, stronger linkages between agriculture and industry through processing, packaging and value addition can promote economic growth. Overall, the study concludes that inclusive agricultural development requires targeted policies, institutional support and equitable access to resources, particularly for small and marginal farmers, women cultivators and landless agricultural labourers.

CONCLUSION

Agriculture remains a fundamental pillar of inclusive economic development in India, particularly in generating rural employment, ensuring livelihood security and reducing poverty. Despite its relatively lower contribution to national output compared to its share in employment, agriculture continues to support a significant proportion of the population. Therefore, improving agricultural productivity, farmers' income and employment conditions is essential for achieving sustainable and equitable economic growth. The study also emphasizes the importance of increased investment in irrigation, modern technology, agricultural research, rural infrastructure, storage and marketing facilities. Special attention must be given to small and marginal farmers, women cultivators and economically disadvantaged regions to ensure equitable distribution of development benefits. Furthermore, agricultural diversification, agro-based industries, food processing and rural enterprises can create additional employment opportunities and strengthen rural incomes. Access to institutional credit, education, healthcare, markets and social protection is equally important for improving rural living standards. The study highlights that agriculture should not be viewed as a secondary sector but as an important partner in India's overall economic transformation. Ultimately, strengthening agriculture through inclusive policies, institutional support and sustainable development strategies can promote poverty reduction, regional balance and long-term economic prosperity in India.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study depends on published secondary information. Differences in survey definitions, reference periods, prices and measurement methods may affect comparisons. Furthermore, national-level statistics may conceal differences between states, regions, farm sizes, genders and social groups. The present study provides opportunities for further empirical investigation into the relationship between agriculture and inclusive economic development. Future research may undertake comparative state-level and district-level studies to understand variations in agricultural investment, irrigation facilities, crop diversification, market access and rural employment.

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